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Turkey - as you like it

A radio interview between Miss Ruth Van Deman, Bureau of Home Economics, and Mr. Wallace Kadderly, Office of Information, broadcast Tuesday, November 14, 1939, in the Department of Agriculture period of the National Farm and Home Hour, by the National Broadcasting Company, and a network of 104 associate radio stations.

WALLACE KADDERLY:

Holding to our regular Tuesday custom, (it used to be a Thursday custom) Ruth Van Deman's here with us again today. And holding to her regular November custom, she's going to tell us what the Bureau of Home Economics knows about roasting turkey.

RUTH VAN DEMAN:

How many customs make a tradition, Wallace?

KADDERLY:

That's something I wouldn't undertake to answer. But that turkey you and Mr. Shrader carved up here on the air last year----Well-I remember that went the very best turkey tradition several points better.

VAN DEMAN:

Careful. Turkey tradition goes a long, long way back. Did you happen to read William Beebe's article about turkeys in a current magazine?

KADDERLY:

You mean the one going back into turkey history 30 million years?

VAN DEMAN:

That's the one. Then you remember Mr. Beebe remarks, rather regretfully, that all through the centuries every road seems to lead Mr. Turkey right to the kitchen.

KADDERLY:

Turkey being what turkey is, I can't blame the Aztecs, or the old Spanish conquistadores, or the Pilgrim Fathers for wanting to eat turkey, once they got a taste.

Of course I respect Mr. Beebe tremendously as a scientist and a naturalist for wanting to preserve and protect our wild turkeys.

VAN DEMAN:

But at the same time you commend and congratulate the poultry scientists for doing what they have done to increase and improve the domestic turkey.

KADDERLY:

That's my position exactly.

VAN DEMAN:

That leads Mr. Turkey straight into the kitchen again, with the oven door

(Over)

swinging wide to receive him.

KADDERLY:

Sure you get him stuffed full of good stuffing.

VAN DEMAN:

A savory bread-crumb stuffing.....

KADDERLY:

.....on the dry side.

VAN DEMAN:

Yes, I know.

KADDERLY:

Seasoned with a dash of onion and herbs.

VAN DEMAN:

Yes, I have a standing order for dry stuffing for you.

KADDERLY:

And don't forget to tie down his legs and wings.

VAN DEMAN:

Truss is the word for that.

KADDERLY:

All right, truss him well. I don't like to carve something that's about to fly off the platter every minite.

VAN DEMAN:

Wallace, we're getting this turkey carved before it's cooked, or even weighed. How big is it?

KADDERLY:

How big?....Oh, so big (gesturing)

VAN DEMAN:

How many you going to serve?

KADDERLY:

Do I have to say that now?

VAN DEMAN:

Well, you know there's a neat rule that says allow 3/4 to 1 pound of turkey for each person who's to be served at table.

KADDERLY:

Does that allow for seconds?

VAN DEMAN:

Yes, that's generous.

KADDERLY:

Is that the weight of the turkey on the hoof, or how?

VAN DEMAN:

No, that's not live weight. That's market weight.....picked but not drawn, with the head and feet on.

KADDERLY:

That's the way we generally pay for a turkey when we buy it.....what the market people call dressed weight.

VAN DEMAN:

That's right.

KADDERLY:

Well according to your rule, 3/4 to 1 pound for each person at table, I think we'll need a 12-pound young turkey. We'll probably have eight for dinner. And I want some cold turkey left.

VAN DEMAN:

I agree with you. Turkey cold is almost better than turkey hot.

Now that we know this bird weighs 12 pounds, we can fix the oven temperature.

KADDERLY:

You mean you vary the oven temperature according to the weight of the bird?

VAN DEMAN:

Wallace, I'm afraid you haven't read this little blue and white folder on Poultry Cooking as carefully as you might.

KADDERLY:

Have I failed to note something important?

VAN DEMAN:

I'm afraid you have. Right here is a timetable.....a very important timetable for roasting young birds. The last item down there is turkey.....see.....

KADDERLY:

I do see. Turkey 6 to 9 pounds.....10 to 13.....14 to 17.

VAN DEMAN:

And so on. And if you look again you'll see the oven temperatures go lower as the birds get larger.

KADDERLY:

And these hours in the oven?.....

VAN DEMAN:

If you had a chance to study those you'd see that in proportion to the weight, it takes longer to roast a small bird than a large one...Now you young 12-pounder is a happy medium. It will probably take 3-1/2 hours, with the oven at 300 degrees all the time.

KADDERLY:

That's what you call a "constant-moderate" oven, isn't it?300 degrees.

VAN DEMAN:

I had a feeling, Wallace, you'd absorbed more of this new theory of cooking poultry than you were willing to let on.

KADDERLY:

It's only here and there the lighting strikes.

VAN DEMAN:

There's no use in carrying times and temperatures around in the head, really. That's what the printed timetables are for.

KADDERLY:

I'll make that printed timetable a definite offer to our Farm and Home friends in a few minutes.

VAN DEMAN:

And back to back with the time talk is the receipt for turkey stuffing you so much admire.

KADDERLY:

Good. And I'm pleased to see it's in quantity for a 10 to 12-pound turkey.

VAN DEMAN:

There are tow or three other points about cooking I'd like to mention. After our talk about roasting young chicken, a listener, a man in Minneapolis, wrote and asked me what I meant by an open pan.

KADDERLY:

A pan without a lid, isn't it?

VAN DEMAN:

Yes, that's what I meant.....an uncovered pan, preferably a rather shallow pan, with a rack in the bottom to keep the bird from sticking, and to let the hot air circulate all around it. We've found from the hundreds of birds cooked in our laboratories that young birds.....turkeys, chickens, what have you..... cook best in that way, provided of course the oven temperature is moderate and that you baste the bird every 30 or 40 minutes with melted fat.

KADDERLY:

And by baste, I've discovered you mean something like "anoint" with fat.

VAN DEMAN:

Yes, pour it on.....spoon up the pan drippings.....and let the melted fat trickle down over the roasting bird. That helps to keep the juices in. And be sure to use fat, not water, or some liquid of that kind. The water will tend to draw juice out, because it makes steam.

And one other thing, start the turkey cooking back up and breast down.

Mr. Rogers, our announcer friend asked me one day how you could balance a turkey on its breastbone in a roasting pan.

KADDERLY:

Can't it lean partly on one elbow?

VAN DEMAN:

That's it exactly.....first one elbow and then the other....then breast up. Then start all over again. It's something like the old-fashioned way of turning the bird on a spit.

The point is, of course, not to expose the breast to so much heat that you crack the skin and cook the meat away from the breastbone.

Well, Wallace, here's to your Thanksgiving turkey.....easy cooking.....easy carving.

KADDERLY:

And happy eating, we hope. Thanks, Ruth, the same to yours.

And, Farm and Home friends, if the leaflet on Poultry Cooking will be of any help in stuffing and roasting your Thanksgiving bird, the Bureau of Home Economics will be happy to send you a copy.

This little blue and white folder tells how to select and prepare the bird for the oven.....

VAN DEMAN:

And how to stuff and truss.....

KADDERLY:

Yes.....and how to turn and baste and time the bird in the oven. I even see a receipt here for making giblet gravy, which certainly given very complete coverage for the Thanksgiving turkey.

And, as I said, the Bureau of Home Economics will be glad to send you this Poultry Cooking folder free. All you need to do is write your name and address on a card, along with the two words Poultry Cooking.

VAN DEMAN:

And address the card to the Bureau of Home Economics.

KADDERLY:

Yes, that's quite essential, Ruth,.....the Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C.

